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FEATURE

Web Watch: Laughing at Lawyers and the Law

Robert J. Ambrogi
Law Technology News
07-26-2004



Image: Comstock Images

Law is serious stuff. But don't tell that to New York lawyer Lawrence Savell, for fear he might abandon his endlessly entertaining site, LawHumor.com, www.lawhumor.com.

Savell dedicates his site "to the proposition that zealous representation of clients and furtherance of the public good can be only enhanced by a healthy willingness to poke fun at ourselves appropriately on occasion."

And poke fun he does, through humorous articles, music, comics and even games. Consider, for example, "Law Review: A Love Story," a lawyer love story written in the style of a law review, complete with footnotes. Listen to excerpts from Savell's recording, "The Lawyer's Holiday Humor Album," featuring songs such as "Santa v. Acme Sleigh" and "Rainmaker Reindeer." Check out Savell's Typo-Man comic book. Play games including "Law Humor Hangman" and "Arrange the Exhibits."

You could kill a lot of otherwise billable time at LawHumor.com, but then you'd be missing out on the many other sites devoted to making lawyers laugh -- or to laughing at lawyers.

Such as Andrew J. McClurg's Lawhaha.com, www.lawhaha.com. McClurg is a "serious" legal scholar and professor of law at Florida International University College of Law. From 1998 to 2001, he wrote "Harmless Error," a humor column published in the ABA Journal. The column led to a book, *The Law School Trip*, parodying legal education. The book led to the Web site.

The site is a mix of McClurg's humor writing and actual oddball humor drawn from the truth-is-

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stranger-than-fiction world of lawyers and law students. Among his writings here are selections from his ABA Journal column and a series called "Who is Suzy Spikes," tracing the ongoing legal struggles of a litigious adolescent girl. From the real world come collections of funny law school moments, weird legal news and strange judicial opinions. Topping it all off are "the world's greatest law review article" and "the universe's best product warning label."

OTHER FUNNY LAWYERS

A humor writer and self-described recovering lawyer, Madeleine Begun Kane writes articles, song parodies, poems, comics and more about whatever irks her -- and, she says, she's easily irked. She covers politics, computers, marriage, cars, work, family, the Internet, the IRS, the news, law, music, money, privacy, technology, Web surfing, media, travel and President Bush, and compiles it all on her Web site, MadKane, www.madkane.com. She has a page of purely legal humor, but don't let it distract you from all the other funny stuff here, particularly her satirical White House dispatches, "Dubya's Daily Diary."

Sean Carter, a lawyer, stand-up comedian and humor writer, follows the lighter side of legal news though his site, Lawpsided, www.lawpsided.com, culling reports of outrageous crimes, offbeat lawsuits and other legal news and compiling them here. Author of the book, *If It Does Not Fit, Must You Acquit? Your Humorous Guide to the Law*, Carter focuses on current legal news, singling out the wackiest stories for reporting and commentary.

Dismayed that his search for legal humor on the Web turned up only stale jokes poking fun at lawyers, Ontario lawyer Daniel Strigberger teamed up with his lawyer-father Marcel to create Legal Humour.com, www.legalhumor.com, targeted at legal professionals -- without the lawyer jokes. Instead, the Strigbergers offer an emporium of humorous commentary, news reports, courtroom stories and cartoons -- and even a somewhat sober essay advocating more humor in law practice.

West Virginia lawyer Bob Noone is known as "the Perry Mason of parody" -- or at least that's what he says. A practicing lawyer, he is also a performing musician who has recorded two albums, "Wingtips Optional" and "Chicken Suit for the Lawyer's Soul." At his Web site, Lawsongs, www.lawsongs.com, you can listen to some of his songs, read selected lyrics, see pictures of him performing, order his albums, and read more about his back-up band, the Well Hung Jury.

Law Fun, www.duhaime.org/Law_fun/fun.htm, is part of the Web site of the British Columbia law firm Duhaime & Company.

The humor you will find here is on the goofy side, as characterized by the image on its first page of the scales of justice balanced on the arms of Mr. Potatohead. The site includes the requisite collection of law jokes, the dumbest things ever said in court, outrageous lawsuits, and a hodgepodge of "bland" legal humor, described as the "the kind you repeat at social gatherings when the senior partners are present."

MAKING FUN OF LAWYERS

The sites so far temper their humor with respect for the profession of law. But not everyone is so fond of lawyers. In fact, you may be surprised to learn that there exists an entire comic genre known as the lawyer joke.

Many of the people who make these jokes appear not to like lawyers very much. For example, at Power of Attorneys, www.power-of-attorneys.com, it was not enough for them to have assembled a wide-ranging collection of lawyer jokes and outrageous lawsuits. They had to go even further, creating a Lawyers Stink Store, complete with hats, shirts and coffee mugs, and publishing the book, *Wake Up and Smell the Lawyers*.

A less vindictive approach is taken by the folks at Nolo, whose Lawyer Joke Emporium, www.nolo.com/humor/jokes.cfm, houses a broad-ranging collection of lawyer jokes, categorized under general headings such as Doctors and Lawyers, Lawyers as Money Grubbers and Lawyers in Hell.

One site is so taken with this topic that it has made it its goal to become the largest repository of lawyer jokes on the Web. On a recent visit, Lawyer Jokes, www.lawyer-jokes.us, had so far collected fewer than 100. It also collects lawyer cartoons.

As it turns out, there are lots of Web sites that compile lawyer jokes. No kidding. Here are just some of them:

- AhaJokes.com Lawyer Jokes, www.ahajokes.com/lawyer_jokes.html.
- ExLawyer.com, www.exlawyer.com.
- ExpertLaw Lawyer Jokes and Legal Humor, www.expertlaw.com/humor/index.html.
- James Fuqua's Law Jokes, www.jamesfuqua.com/lawjokes.html.
- PondScumAndLawyers.com, <http://pondscumandlawyers.com>.
- Profession Jokes: Lawyers, www.workjoke.com/projoke40.htm.
- SCROOMtimes Lawyer Jokes, www.scroom.com/SCROOMtimes/Humor/Lawyer.shtml.
- The 'Lectric Law Library's Rubber Room, www.lectlaw.com/rub.html.

LAWYER CARTOONS

Stuart Rees calls himself a lawyer to cartoonists and a cartoonist to lawyers. This San Diego-based Harvard Law School graduate has a law practice that consists of representing syndicated cartoonists nationwide. He also draws his own cartoon about lawyers and the law, Stu's Views, www.stus.com. You can find Rees' most recent cartoon here, along with an archive of earlier installments. You can also subscribe to receive Stu's Views by e-mail every week.

Rees is not the only Web source of law-related cartoons. Here are some others:

- Cartoon Bank, www.cartoonbank.com, is home to nine decades of New Yorker cartoons, a fair share of which covered lawyers and law.
- DansCartoons.com, www.danscartoons.com/law_cartoons.htm, has this collection of law and legal cartoons drawn by Dan Rosandich.
- Juris, www.juriscomic.com, a comic strip that looks at all things law.
- LawComix, www.lawcomix.com, a broad-ranging collection of cartoons by lawyer Charles Pugsley Fincher, whose legal and political cartoons have been widely published.
- Lawtoons, www.lawtoons.com, a comic drawn by Suzan F. Charlton, a lawyer in Washington, D.C.
- Mason Darrow, non-profit lawyer, www.masondarrow.com, is drawn by Maine-based cartoonist John Klossner, who makes his archives available here.

If we cannot laugh at ourselves, someone once wrote, others will be glad to do it for us. On the Web, there is plenty of both -- lawyers laughing at themselves and others laughing at lawyers.

Robert J. Ambrogi, a lawyer in Rockport, Mass., is vice president of editorial services for Jaffe Associates (www.JaffeAssociates.com). He is author of The Essential Guide to the Best (and Worst) Legal Sites on the Web, the second edition of which will soon be available at www.lawcatalog.com, and can be reached at AmbrogiR@JaffeAssociates.com.